

Long Term Care NEWSLETTER

Indiana State Department of Health

ISDH Long Term Care
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National Influenza Vaccination Week December 8 - December 14, 2008



National Influenza Vaccination Week



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has announced the week of December 8-14, 2008, as National Influenza Vaccination Week. This event is designed to highlight the importance of continuing influenza (flu) vaccination, as well as foster greater use of flu vaccine through the months of November, December and beyond.

This year, Tuesday, December 9th, is designated as Children's Vaccination Day. Thursday, December 11th, is designated as Seniors' vaccination Day, and Friday, December 12th, will focus on vaccination of health care workers. Please help emphasize the importance of vaccinating these special populations with awareness activities.

See the CDC [National Influenza Vaccination Week](http://www.cdc.gov/nivw) Web site for more information.

- [NetConference: Influenza Vaccination of Healthcare Workers](#) (December 12)
- [Resources for Health Professionals and Partners](#)
Media toolkit, Podcasts, Ecards, [New! Ready-to-use articles for media](#), and more...
- [See What Others are Doing: Late Season Activities beyond NIVW](#)
National and State Events

What is Influenza?

The Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) Web site provides [Communicable Disease Quick Facts](#)

on a variety of diseases. The following is the Quick Fact for Influenza.

What is Influenza?

Influenza (flu) is a contagious illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the respiratory tract. The illness can be mild to severe and can be fatal in some people. Although anyone can become infected with influenza, the elderly, young children, or anyone with other health problems are at greater risk from developing more severe illness or suffer from the complications of influenza, such as pneumonia. Every year, more than 36,000 Americans die from influenza-related complications.

How is influenza spread?

Influenza is spread by respiratory droplets from close contact with infected persons or contact with contaminated surfaces or objects. Infection can occur when influenza viruses contact the eyes, mouth, or nose, or through inhaling droplets from a sneeze or cough. Sometimes people may become infected by touching surfaces or objects contaminated with influenza viruses and then touching their eyes, mouth, or nose. Infected persons may be able to spread the virus to others about one day before they develop symptoms and up to five days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to spread the flu to someone else before you even know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

What are the symptoms of influenza?

Symptoms usually include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Headache
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Muscle aches

Symptoms usually start about 1-4 days after being exposed and last 2-7 days.

How do I know if I have influenza?

See your health care provider. A health care professional usually diagnoses influenza by reviewing your symptoms and sometimes will collect a nose or throat swab to test for influenza viruses.

How is influenza treated?

Influenza is usually treated by relieving the symptoms with fever reducers, throat or cough drops, water, and plenty of rest. If the diagnosis is made at the very beginning of the illness, a doctor may prescribe antiviral medication.

How can I protect myself from influenza?

The best protection is to get a flu shot every year before the flu season starts. Since influenza viruses change over time, it is important to get a shot each year. Each year the vaccine is remade to include the types of flu virus expected to cause illness during that flu season. The vaccine begins to protect you within a few days after vaccination, but the vaccine is not fully effective until about 14 days after vaccination.

Good respiratory hygiene is important to prevent the spread of ALL respiratory infections, including influenza.

- Instead of your hands, use your elbow or upper arm or a tissue to cover your mouth and nose or when you cough or sneeze. Immediately throw used tissues into the wastebasket.
- Wash hands with soap and water after coughing or sneezing or clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner if water is not available. Wash hands thoroughly before touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home from work, school, and social gatherings when you are sick. This will help prevent others from catching your illness and gives your body the rest it needs to recover.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands. Many diseases often spread this way.

Who should get the vaccine?

Influenza vaccines protect against three different influenza viruses. The vaccine comes in two forms: the flu shot and the nasal spray.

In general, anyone who wants to reduce their chances of getting the flu can get vaccinated. However, certain people should get vaccinated each year either because they are at high risk of having serious flu-related complications or because they live with or care for high risk persons. During flu seasons when vaccine supplies are limited or delayed, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) makes recommendations regarding priority groups for vaccination.

People who should get vaccinated each year are:

1. Children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday
2. Pregnant women
3. People 50 years of age and older
4. People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
5. People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
6. People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
 - a. Health care workers
 - b. Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from flu
 - c. Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)

People who have had a severe allergic reaction to eggs or to a previous flu shot or have had a history of Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) should NOT get a flu shot.

Use of the Nasal Spray Flu Vaccine

Vaccination with the nasal-spray flu vaccine is an option for healthy* people 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant. The one exception is healthy persons who care for persons with severely weakened immune systems who require a protected environment; these healthy persons should get the flu shot. Some people should not be vaccinated without first consulting a physician. They include:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination in the past.
- People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine in the past.
- Children less than 6 months of age (influenza vaccine is not approved for use in this age group).
- People who have a moderate or severe illness with a fever should wait to get vaccinated until they have recovered.



National Influenza Vaccination Week is a good time for health care facilities to review vaccination programs and systems. Please use this opportunity to ensure that residents and staff have been appropriately vaccinated.

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